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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 004165

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/05/2016
TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [MNUC](#) [KNNP](#) [KN](#) [KS](#)
SUBJECT: TIGHTENING INSPECTIONS OF NORTH-SOUTH CARGO

REF: A. SEOUL 4143

[1](#)B. SEOUL 3970

Classified By: AMB. Alexander Vershbow. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY and Action Request: Since their inception in 2004, the East and West Transportation Corridors -- allowing goods and South Korean citizens to travel to/from North Korea by passing through the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) -- have been a monitoring challenge. The problem has become more acute in light of continuing North Korean nuclear and missile development activities. Embassy and USFK are concerned that the ROKG does not have adequate safeguards in place to enforce fully the requirements of UNSCR 1718. Embassy requests Department's concurrence in seeking from the ROKG a more thorough inspection regime for the movement of goods and people through the transportation corridors. Embassy also requests Washington's agreement as soon as possible to provide export licenses for a radio frequency identification device (RFID) system to be placed on both sides of the DMZ (Ref A) as a means to enhance monitoring. See action request, para 18. END SUMMARY.

The Armistice Agreement

[1](#)2. (U) The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) is a 4 kilometer-wide buffer zone divided down the middle by the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) that separates North and South Korea. According to the 1953 Armistice Agreement, the Korean People's Army (KPA) is responsible for the northern two kilometers of the DMZ, while the United Nations Command (UNC) has jurisdiction over the southern two kilometers.

Western Corridor to Kaesong

[1](#)3. (U) During the North-South summit in June 2000, then ROK President Kim Dae-jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il pledged to reconnect a railway connecting the two countries across the DMZ. As a result, on November 17 of that year, the UNC signed a Subsequent Agreement to the Armistice that

established a (Western) Transportation Corridor (TC West) and transferred administrative control of the corridor to the ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND) on the southern half, while the KPA retained control over the northern half. Mine clearing for TC West was completed on Christmas 2002 and in June 2003, the ROK completed a four-lane paved highway that runs through TC West to the MDL. By October of that year, the ROK had added a rail line as well, although it has not, as yet, been used.

¶4. (U) TC West is primarily used to transport raw materials, goods and personnel to and from the 16,000-acre Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), which serves as the signature project in North-South economic cooperation. Operational since the fall of 2004, TC West corridor operates six days a week and is closed on Sundays.

Eastern Corridor to Mount Kumgang

¶5. (U) On September 12, 2002, the UNC signed a second Subsequent Agreement to the Armistice establishing a second transportation corridor (TC East). As with TC West, administrative control over the southern half of the corridor was transferred from UNC to MND. Mine clearing along the corridor up to the MDL was completed in May 2003. TC East became operational in the fall of 2004, and since then has primarily served to transport South Korean tourists to and from the Mt. Kumgang sightseeing resort. TC East is operational seven days a week.

The Role of UNCMAC

¶6. (SBU) According to the Armistice Agreement, all movements through the DMZ fall under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC). UNCMAC has therefore assigned a United Nations Command Corridor Control Officer (UNCCCO) to monitor the transportation corridors. The UNCCCO's duties are to:

- Monitor and ensure Armistice compliance
- Maintain UNC presence
- Serve as the eyes and ears of the UNC Commander
- Serve as a liaison between the TC and the UNC
- Screen, staff and monitor MDL crossings

¶7. (SBU) There is a Standard Operating Procedures Agreement between UNC and MND that outlines the MDL crossing approval process. That process is as follows:

- a. MND receives the MDL crossing request from the ROK Ministry of Unification and forwards the request to the UNCCCOs in the TCs.
- b. The UNCCCO screens the request and forwards it to UNCMAC headquarters.
- c. UNCMAC sends approval or disapproval back to the UNCCCO and notifies the MDL control center in Seoul of the upcoming crossing.
- d. The TC situation room sends the approved crossing request to the KPA via facsimile.
- e. The KPA replies via facsimile to the TC situation room (NOTE: The KPA has never, in fact, carried out this procedure. END NOTE.)
- f. The TC situation room forwards the reply to both UNCMAC and MND, then monitors the actual crossings.

ROK CIQ Facilities

¶8. (U) The South Korean government operates two Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) facilities at the entrance to TC West. One is for inspecting people, goods and vehicles headed into North Korea; the other for people, goods and vehicles coming into South Korea from the North. The ROKG has only one CIQ facility at the entrance to TC East, where the traffic is limited mostly to buses carrying tourists headed to/from Mt. Kumgang.

¶9. (C) However, unlike CIQ facilities elsewhere in the ROK, which are operated solely by the Ministry of Justice, the TC East and West CIQs are co-operated by the ROK Ministry of Unification (MOU). Customs officials posted to these facilities are seconded to MOU, and it is that ministry, rather than the Ministry of Justice, which clearly has overall authority over how inspections are conducted at those sites.

¶10. (C) The UNC Corridor Control Officer receives copies of the manifests of all items transiting through the transportation corridors. The UNCCCO (a U.S. officer) and/or his deputy (a New Zealand or UK officer) review the transit manifests, but do not inspect the cargo since the CIQ is located outside of the DMZ. Because the UNCCCO has no oversight of the CIQ, he is unable to confirm the frequency or quality of CIQ inspections.

Quality of ROKG Inspections

¶11. (C) In 2004, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) team visited the two transportation corridors to assess the ROKG's inspections regime. According to the 2004 CBP Report, ROK Customs officials told their U.S. counterparts that all materials entering South Korea from the Kaesong Industrial Complex would be transported in shipping containers and that all containers would be examined. This statement was refuted by the MOU official on-site who claimed no containers would be examined, and that all containers would simply "pass through" the CIQ. Asked if a South Korean seal would be affixed to the containers that had been opened for inspection, the ROK customs official said yes, while the MOU official once again refuted that statement and confirmed to the CBP Team that "no containers would be examined."

¶12. (C) The CBP report went on to state that only cursory inspections were carried out at the CIQ stations. These "inspections" consisted primarily of a visual screening of the exterior of the conveyance and cargo. The report also notes that the ROK customs officials see the same drivers and vehicles most every day, highlighting the concern that such familiarity may lead to less vigilance in the performance of their duties.

Insufficient Information

¶13. (C) The CBP assessment team also found the cargo and passenger description information insufficient. The manifests do not contain what customs officials would normally consider to be mandatory information, such as the time, direction, number of passengers, number of vehicles, corridor tracking number, and brief description of cargo.

300 Vehicles and 3,000 People a Day

¶14. (C) According to UNCMAC, a total of 649,290 people made 6,273 crossings of the DMZ in 62,223 vehicles during the full year of operation of the TC highways in 2005. At TC East, which is primarily used to facilitate bus tours to Mt. Kumgang, the CBP Team noted that customs processing time for 345 travelers returning from North Korea took approximately fifteen minutes, and that no vehicles were taken aside for further inspection, or individuals for further questioning.

Commercial cargo shipments through TC East are prohibited. However, transportation of materials for construction and maintenance related to the corridor and Mt. Kumgang resort are permitted.

¶15. (C) Also troubling, according to both the UNCCCO and U.S. Customs, the ROK CIQs at the transportation corridors do not have mobile or fixed non-intrusive inspection (X-ray) equipment, radiation portal monitors, or other types of radiation detection machines. Furthermore, there are no designated areas for the temporary storage of hazardous materials. There are also no canines on site for the detection of narcotics, explosives, or persons. Finally, the ROK customs officials assigned to the CIQs are not armed. For political and practical reasons, UNCMAC has never exercised its authority to inspect items crossing between the two Koreas through the DMZ. At the practical level, UNCMAC would have to acquire a significant increase in manpower to carry out the inspections. Moreover, since UNCMAC does not have the authority to conduct inspections at the CIQs, which are located outside the DMZ, any UNCMAC inspections would have to be conducted within the DMZ. But more significantly, even if such resources could be found, the ROKG will not allow such inspections by UNCMAC, because doing so would be perceived as ceding authority over the two most important projects symbolizing South Korea's engagement policy with the North. For these reasons, for the foreseeable future, we believe only the ROKG can conduct the necessary inspections in the two transportation corridors.

Tighter Inspections?

¶16. (C) During meetings in November 2006 with visiting Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International

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Security Robert Joseph to discuss steps the ROKG would take to implement UNSCR 1718, Deputy Foreign Minister for Policy Planning and International Organizations, Park In-kook, said the ROK would tighten inspections at both the East and West transportation corridor CIQs (Ref B). This would take some time, Park said, because additional customs officials would have to be transferred to those sites and secondary inspection areas would need to be established. He pledged, however, that tighter inspections would result.

¶17. (C) During a more recent meeting with the DCM, Park urged USG approval of an export license request for a Rapid Frequency Identification Drive (RFID) system at TC West. He said that our approval would enable him to press his MOU colleagues for more stringent controls (Ref A). Embassy agrees with Park's assessment and believes that a RFID system will be helpful in monitoring cross-DMZ shipments. Moreover, we need to avoid sending mixed signals to ROKG on the need to strictly monitor all goods and personnel going in and out of North Korea.

Comment and Action Request

¶18. (C) To date we have not seen any tightening of inspections. We also believe that without external pressure, changes are unlikely because of the tough opposition of the Ministry of Unification to any restriction of movement of goods and people to and from the KIC and Mt. Kumgang tourist sites. We are, therefore, seeking Department's concurrence for us to raise this matter with senior MOFAT officials. We recommend Department's concurrence with the following talking points:

-- Over the past six months, the DPRK has tested missiles and nuclear devices.

-- The international community including the ROK, has responded with unanimous condemnation to these provocative actions by the DPRK. UNSCR 1718 outlines what each member

nation must do to counter proliferation threats from the DPRK.

-- Paragraph 8 of UNSCR 1718 states that all member states must prevent direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to the DPRK certain military equipment and WMD related systems and materiel.

-- In this connection the United States is concerned about the adequacy of the ROKG's customs, immigration and quarantine services located in the two Transportation Corridors.

-- We note that according to a 2004 report by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the ROKG inspections consisted primarily of a visual screening of the exterior of the conveyance and cargo. The team also found the cargo and passenger description information insufficient. The manifests do not contain what customs officials would normally consider to be mandatory information, such as time, direction, number of passengers, number of vehicles, corridor tracking number, and description of cargo.

-- The CBP team also found that your CIQs do not have mobile or fixed non-intrusive inspection (X-ray) equipment or radiation detection monitors. There were also no designated areas for the temporary storage of hazardous material.

--The ROKG should consider strengthening the CIQ inspections regime at the East and West Transportation Corridors. We believe an enhanced inspections regime must involve additional manpower and other resources, especially the use of modern detection equipment.

-- Given the sharp increase in the number of passengers passing through the corridors, the ROKG might also consider establishing a Passenger Analysis Unit, consisting of participants from MOU, MOJ, MND, and UNCMAC, for improved CIQ immigration inspection.

-- (If raised) The United States Government is examining your request for RFID. Embassy has conveyed to Washington your views that RFID systems will assist in your inspections of cross DMZ cargo. END COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST.
VERSHBOW